



AN

ESSAY

ON THE

LEARNING OF SHAKESPEARE:

ADDRESSED TO

JOSEPH CRADOCK, Esq;

BY

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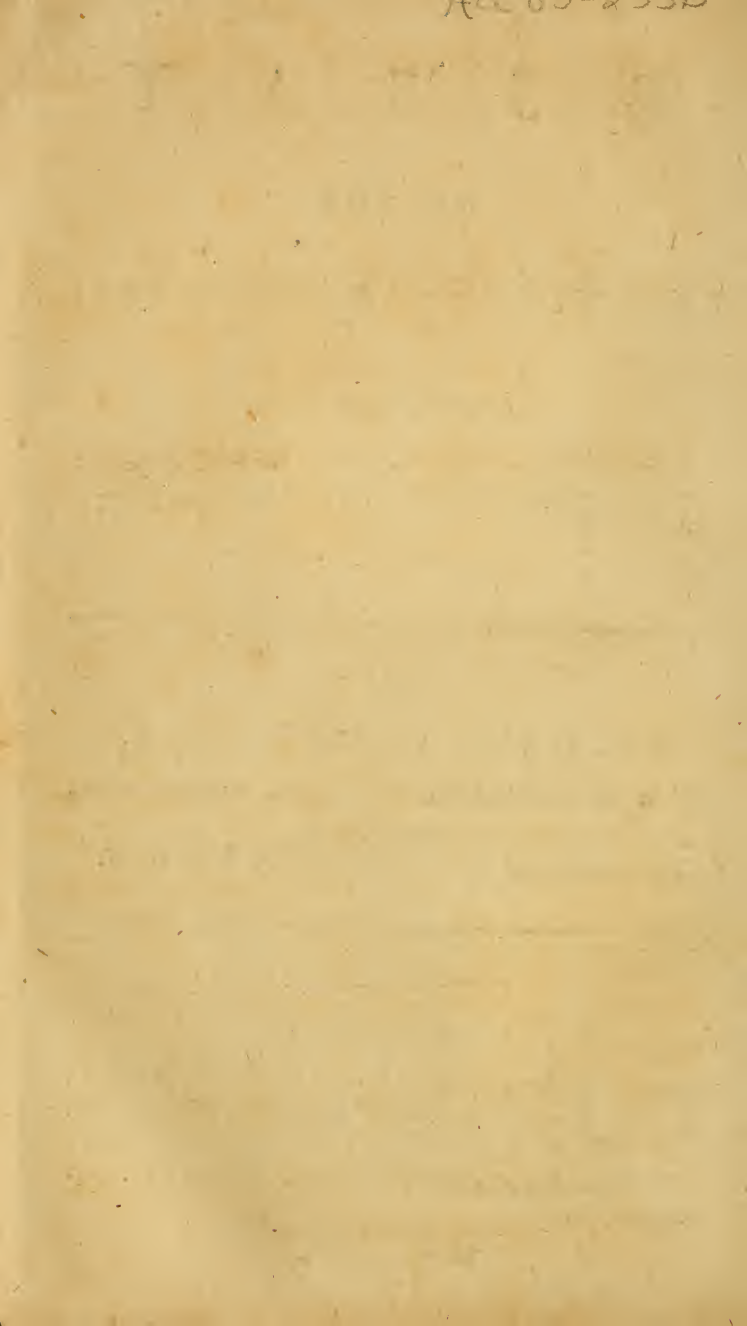
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JOSEPH CRADOCK, Esq;

“SHAKESPEARE, says a Brother of the *Craft*, is a vast garden of criticism:” and certainly no one can be favoured with more weeders *gratis*.

But how often, my dear Sir, are weeds and flowers torn up indiscriminately?—the ravaged spot is re-planted in a moment, and a profusion of critical thorns thrown over it for security.

“A prudent man therefore would not venture his fingers amongst them.”

Be however in little pain for your friend, who regards himself sufficiently to be cautious: yet he asserts with confidence, that no improvement can be expected, whilst the natural soil is mistaken for a hot-bed, and the Natives of the banks of *Avon* are scientifically choked with the culture of exoticks.

Thus much for metaphor; it is contrary to the *Statute* to fly out so early: but who can tell, whether it may not be demonstrated by some critick or other, that a deviation from rule is peculiarly happy in an Essay on *Shakespeare*!

You have long known my opinion concerning the literary acquisitions of our immortal Dramatist; and remember how I congratulated myself on my coincidence with the last and best of his Editors. I told you however, that his *small Latin and less Greek*^a would still be litigated, and you see too assuredly, that I was not mistaken. The trumpet hath been sounded against “the darling project of representing *Shakespeare* as one of the illiterate vul-

^a This passage of *Ben. Jonson*, so often quoted, is given us in the admirable preface to the late Edition, with a various reading, “small Latin and *no* Greek,” which hath been held up to the Publick for a modern sophistication: yet whether an error or not, it was adopted above a Century ago by a Panegyrist on *Cartwright*.

vulgar;" and indeed to so good purpose, that I would by all means recommend the performer to the army of the *braying Faction*, recorded by *Cervantes*. The testimony of his contemporaries is again disputed; constant tradition is opposed by flimsy arguments; and nothing is heard, but confusion and nonsense. One could scarcely imagine this a topick very likely to inflame the passions: it is asserted by *Dryden*, that "those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greatest commendation;" yet an attack upon an article of faith hath been usually received with more temper and complacence, than the unfortunate opinion, which I am about to defend.

But let us previously lament with every lover of *Shakespeare*, that the Question was not fully discussed by Mr. *Johnson* himself: what he sees intuitively, others must arrive at by a series of proofs; and I have not time to *teach* with precision: be contented therefore with a few cursory observations, as they may happen to arise from the Chaos of Papers, you have so often laughed at, "a stock sufficient to set up an *Editor in form*." I am convinced of the strength of my cause, and superior to any little advantage from sophistical arrangements.

General positions without proofs will probably have no great weight on either side, yet it may not seem fair to suppress them : take them therefore as their Authors occur to me, and we will afterward proceed to particulars.

The testimony of *Ben.* stands foremost ; and many have held it sufficient to decide the controversy : in the warmest Panegyrick, that ever was written, he apologizes for what *he* supposed the only defect in his “ beloved Friend.” —

————— “ Soul of the age !

Th’ applause ! delight ! the wonder of our stage !”

In truth the received opinion of the pride and malignity of *Jonson*, at least in the earlier part of life, is absolutely groundless : at this time scarce a play or a poem appeared without *Ben’s* encomium, from the original *Shakespeare* to the translator of *Du Bartas*.

But *Jonson* is by no means our only authority. *Drayton* the countryman and acquaintance of *Shakespeare*, determines his excellence to the *naturall Braine* only. *Digges*, a wit of the town before *Shakespeare* left the stage, is very strong to the purpose,

——— “ Nature only helpt him, for looke thorow

This whole book, thou shalt find he doth not borrow

One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,

Nor once from vulgar Languages translate.”

Suckling

Suckling opposes his *easier strain* to the *sweat of learned Jonson*. *Denham* assures us, that all he had was from *old Mother-wit*. His *native wood-notes wild*, every one remembers to be celebrated by *Milton*. *Dryden* observes prettily enough, that “he wanted not the spectacles of books to read Nature.” He came out of her hand, as some one else expresses it, like *Pallas* out of *Jove’s* head, at full growth and mature.

Fuller, a diligent and equal searcher after truth and quibbles, declares positively, that “his learning was very little, — that *Nature* was all the *Art* used upon him, as *he himself*, if alive, would confess.” And may we not say, he did confess it, when he apologized for his *untutored lines* to his noble patron the Earl of *Southampton*? this list of witnesses might be easily protracted; but I flatter myself, I shall stand in no need of their evidence.

One of the first and most vehement assertors of the learning of *Shakespeare*, was the Editor of his Poems, the well-known Mr. *Gildon*; and his steps were most punctually followed by a subsequent labourer in the same department, Dr. *Sewel*.

Mr. *Pope* supposed “little ground for the common opinion of his want of learning:”

once

once indeed he made a proper distinction between *learning* and *languages*, as I would be understood to do in my Title-page; but unfortunately he forgot it in the course of his disquisition, and endeavoured to persuade himself, that *Shakespeare's* acquaintance with the Ancients might be actually proved by the same medium as *Jonson's*.

Mr. *Theobald* is “very unwilling to allow him so poor a scholar, as many have laboured to represent him;” and yet is “cautious of declaring too positively on the other side the question.”

Dr. *Warburton* hath exposed the futility of some arguments from *suspected* imitations; and yet offers others, if I mistake not, as easily refuted.

Mr. *Upton* wonders “with what kind of reasoning any one could be so far imposed upon, as to imagine that *Shakespeare* had no learning;” and lashes with much zeal and satisfaction “the pride and pertness of dunces, who under such a name would gladly shelter their own idleness and ignorance.”

Like the learned Knight, at every anomaly in grammar or metre,

“H’ hath hard words ready to shew why,
And tell what *Rule* he did it by.”

How would the old Bard have been astonished to have found, that he had very skilfully given the *trochaic dimeter brachycatalectic*, commonly called the *ithyphallic* measure to the Witches in *Macbeth*! and that now and then a halting Verse afforded a most beautiful instance of the *Pes proceleusmaticus*!

“ But, continues Mr. Upton, it was a learned age; Roger Ascham assures us, that Queen Elizabeth read more Greek every day, than some Dignitaries of the Church did Latin in a whole week.” This appears very probable; and a pleasant proof it is of the general learning of the times, and of *Shakespeare* in particular. I wonder, he did not corroborate it with an extract from her injunctions to her Clergy, that “ such as were but *mean Readers* should peruse over before once or twice the Chapters and Homilies, to the intent they might read to the better understanding of the people.”

Dr. Grey declares, that *Shakespeare's* knowledge in the Greek and Latin tongues cannot reasonably be called in question. Dr. Dodd supposes it *proved*, that he was not such a novice in learning and antiquity as *some people* would pretend. And to close the whole, for I suspect you to be tired of quotation,

Mr.

Mr. *Whalley*, the ingenious Editor of *Jonson*, hath written a piece expressly on this subject: perhaps from a very excusable partiality, he was willing to draw *Shakespeare* from the field of Nature to classick ground, where alone he knew his Author was able to cope with him.

These criticks, and many others their coadjutors, have supposed themselves able to trace *Shakespeare* in the writings of the Ancients; and have sometimes persuaded us of their own learning, whatever became of their Author's. Plagiarisms have been discovered in every natural description and every moral sentiment. Indeed by the kind assistance of the various *Excerpta*, *Sententiæ*, and *Flores*, this business may be effected with very little expense of time or sagacity; as *Addison* hath demonstrated in his Comment on *Chevy-chace*, and *Wagstaff* on *Tom Thumb*: and I myself will engage to give you quotations from the elder *English* writers (for to own the truth, I was once idle enough to collect such) which shall carry with them at least an equal degree of similarity. But there will be no occasion to waste any more of our time in this department, whilst the world is in possession of the *Marks of Imitation*.

“*Shakespeare* however hath frequent allusions

sions to the *facts* and *fables* of antiquity:” this is certainly true, and as *Mat. Prior* says, to save the effusion of more Christian ink, I will endeavour to shew, how they came to his acquaintance.

It is notorious, that much of his *matter of fact* knowledge is deduced from *Plutarch*: but in what language he read him, hath yet been the question. Mr. *Upton* is pretty confident of his skill in the Original, and corrects accordingly the *Errors of his Copyists* by the *Greek* standard. Take a few instances, which will elucidate this matter sufficiently.

In the third Act of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Octavius* represents to his Courtiers the imperial pomp of those illustrious lovers, and the arrangement of their dominion,

“ Unto her
He gave the ’stablishment of Egypt, made her
Of lower Syria, Cyprus, *Lydia*,
Absolute Queen.”

Read *Libya*, says the critick *authoritatively*, as is plain from *Plutarch*, Πρώτην μὲν ἀπέφηνε Κλεοπάτραν βασίλισσαν Αἰγύπτου καὶ Κύπρου καὶ ΛΙΒΥΗΣ, καὶ κοίλης Συρίας.

This is very true: Mr. *Heath* accedes to the correction, and Mr. *Johnson* admits it into the Text: but turn to the translation, from the

French of *Amyot*, by *Thomas North*, 1579, and you will at once see the origin of the mistake.

“First of all he did establish *Cleopatra* Queene of *Ægypt*, of *Cyprus*, of *Lydia*, and the lower *Syria*.”

Again in the Fourth Act,

————— “My messenger
He hath whipt with rods, dares me to personal combat,
Cæsar to *Anthony*. Let th’ old *Ruffian* know
I have many other ways to die; mean time
Laugh at his challenge.” —

“What a reply is this, cries *Mr. Upton*?
'tis acknowledging he should fall under the
unequal combat. But if we read,

————— “Let th’ old *Ruffian* know
He hath many other ways to die; mean time
I laugh at his challenge.” —

We have the poignancy and the very repartee
of *Cæsar* in *Plutarch*.”

This correction was first made by Sir
Thomas Hanmer, and *Mr. Johnson* hath received
it. Most indisputably it is the sense of *Plu-*
tarch, and given so in the modern translations:
but *Shakespeare* was misled by the ambiguity
of the old one, “*Antonius* sent again to
challenge *Cæsar* to fight him: *Cæsar* answered,
That he had many other ways to die,
than so.”

In the Third Act of *Julius Cæsar*, *Anthony* in his well-known harangue to the people, repeats a part of the Emperor's will,

———— “ To every Roman citizen he gives,
To every sev’ral man, seventy five drachma’s —
Moreover he hath left you all his walks,
His private arbours, and new-planted orchards,
On *this* side Tyber.” —

“ Our Author certainly wrote, says Mr. *Theobald*, On *that* side Tyber —

Trans Tiberim — prope Cæsar’s hortos.
And *Plutarch*, whom *Shakespeare* very diligently studied expressly declares, that he left the publick his gardens and walks, πέραν τῷ ποταμῷ beyond the *Tyber*.”

This emendation likewise hath been adopted by the subsequent Editors; but hear again the old Translation, where *Shakespeare’s* study lay, “ He bequeathed unto every citizen of Rome, seventy-five drachmas a man, and he left his gardens and arbours unto the people, which he had on *this* side of the river of Tyber.” I could furnish you with many more instances, but these are as good as a thousand.

Hence had our Author his characteristick knowledge of *Brutus* and *Anthony*, upon which much argumentation for his learning hath been founded: and hence *literatim* the Epitaph on *Timon*, which it was once presumed, he had

corrected from the blunders of the Latin version, by his own superior knowledge of the Original.

“ But *Shakespeare*, persists Mr. *Upton*, hath some *Greek Expressions*.” Indeed! — “ We have one in *Coriolanus*,

“ It is held
That valour is the chiefeſt Virtue, and
Moſt dignifies the *Haver*.” —

and another in *Macbeth*,

“ My noble Partner
You great with preſent grace and great prediction
Of noble *having*.” —

Gr. ἔχεια. and πρὸς τὸν ἔχοντα, to the *Haver*.”

This was the common language of *Shakespeare*'s time. “ Lye in a water-bearer's houſe ! ſays Maſter *Mathew* of *Bobadil*, a Gentleman of his *havings* ! ” and *Daniel* the Hiſtorian uſes the word frequently. *Having* ſeems to be ſynonymous with *behaviour* in *Douglas* and the elder Scotch writers.

Haver is every where met with : tho' unfortunately the πρὸς τὸν ἔχοντα of *Sophocles*, produced as an authority for it, is ſuſpected by *Kuſter*, as good a critick in theſe matters, to have abſolutely a different meaning.

But what ſhall we ſay to the learning of the *Clown* in *Hamlet*, “ Ay, tell me that, and
unyoke ? ”

unyoke?" alluding to the *Βελυτός* of the *Greeks*: and *Homer* and his Scholiast are quoted accordingly.

If it be not sufficient to assert it, with *Dr. Warburton*, a phrase taken from *Husbandry*, without much depth of reading; we may produce it from a *Dittie* of the workmen of *Dover*, preserved in the additions to *Hollingshed*,

"My bow is broke, I would *unyoke*,
My foot is sore, I can worke no more."

An expression of my Dame *Quickly* is next fastened upon, which you may look for in vain in the modern text; she calls the pretended Fairies in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*,

—————"Orphan Heirs of fixed Destiny."

and how elegant is this, quoth *Mr. Upton*, supposing the word to be used, as a *Grecian* would have used it? ὀρφανός ab ὀρφνός — acting in darkness and obscurity."

Mr. Heath assures us, that the bare mention of such an interpretation, is a sufficient refutation of it: and his critical word will be rather taken in *Greek* than in *English*: in the same hands therefore I will venture to leave all our author's knowledge of the *Old Comedy*, and his etymological learning in the word, *Desdemona*,

Surely poor Mr. *Upton* was very little acquainted with *Fairies*, notwithstanding his laborious study of *Spenser*. The last authentick account of them is from our Countryman, *Lilly*; and it by no means agrees with the learned interpretation: for they appeared in his *Hurst* wood in a *most illustrious Glory*, — “and indeed, proceeds the Sage, it is not given to very many persons to endure their *glorious aspects*.”

The only use of transcribing these things, is to show what absurdities men for ever run into, when they lay down a Hypothesis, and afterward seek for arguments in the support of it. What else could induce this man, by no means a bad scholar, to doubt whether *True-penny* might not be derived from *Τρύπανον*; and quote upon us with much parade an old Scholiast on *Aristophanes*? I will not stop to confute him: nor take any notice of two or three more Expressions, in which he was pleased to suppose some learned meaning or other; all which he might have found in every Writer of the time, or still more easily in the vulgar Translation of the Bible, by consulting the Concordance of *Alexander Cruden*.

But whence have we the Plot of *Timon*, except from the *Greek* of *Lucian*? The Editors
and

and Criticks have been never at a greater loss, than in their inquiries of this sort ; and the source of a Tale hath been often in vain sought abroad, which might easily have been found at home : My good friend, the very ingenious Editor of the *Reliques of ancient English Poetry*, hath shewn our Author to have been sometimes contented with a legendary *Ballad*.

The Story of the *Misanthrope* is told in almost every Collection of the time ; and particularly in two books, with which *Shakespeare* was intimately acquainted ; the *Palace of Pleasure*, and the *English Plutarch*. Indeed from a passage in an old Play, called *Jack Drums Entertainment*, I conjecture that he had before made his appearance on the Stage.

Were this a proper place for such a disquisition, I could give you many cases of this kind. We are sent for instance to *Cinthio* for the Plot of *Measure for Measure*, and *Shakespeare's* judgement hath been attacked for some deviations from him in the conduct of it : when probably all he knew of the matter was from *Madam Isabella* in the *Heptameron* of *Whetstone*. *Ariosto* is continually quoted for the Fable of *Much ado about Nothing* ; but I suspect our Poet to have been satisfied with the *Geneura* of *Turberville*. As you like it was
certainly

certainly borrowed, if we believe Dr. Grey, and Mr. Upton, from the *Coke's Tale of Gamelyn*; which by the way was not printed 'till a century afterwards: when in truth the old Bard, who was no hunter of M.S.S. contented himself with Dr. Lodge's *Rosalynd or Euphues' Golden Legacye*. The Story of *All's well that ends well*, or, as I suppose it to have been sometimes called, *Loves labour wonne*, is originally indeed the property of *Boccace*,^b but it came immediately to *Shakespeare* from *Painter's Giletta of Narbon*. Mr. *Langbaine* could not conceive, whence the Story of *Pericles* could be taken, "not meeting in History with any such *Prince of Tyre*;" yet his legend may be found at large in old *Gower*, under the name of *Appolynus*.

Pericles is one of the Plays omitted in the later Editions, as well as the first Folio's, and not improperly; tho' it was published many years

^b Our ancient Poets are under greater obligations to *Boccace*, than is generally imagined. Who would suspect, that *Chaucer* hath borrowed from an *Italian* the facetious Tale of the *Miller of Trumpington*?

Mr. *Dryden* observes on the Epic performance of *Palamon and Arcite*, a poem little inferior in his opinion to the *Iliad* or the *Æneid*, that the name of it's Author is wholly lost, and *Chaucer* is now become the Original. But he is mistaken: this likewise was the work of *Boccace*, and printed at *Ferrara* in 1475. I have seen a copy of it in the noble Library of the very learned and communicative Dr. *Askew*.

years before the death of *Shakespeare*, with his name in the Title-page. *Aulus Gellius* informs us, that some Plays are ascribed absolutely to *Plautus*, which he only *retouched* and *polished*; and this is undoubtedly the case with our Author likewise. The revival of this performance was probably his earliest attempt in the Drama. I know, that another of these discarded pieces, the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, hath been frequently called so; but most certainly it was not written by our Poet at all. The Fact on which it is built, was perpetrated no sooner than 1604: much too late for so mean a performance from the hand of *Shakespeare*.

Sometimes a very little matter detects a forgery. You may remember a Play called the *Double Falshood*, which Mr. *Theobald* was desirous of palming upon the world for a posthumous one of *Shakespeare*: and I see, it is reckoned as such in the last Edition of the *Bodleian Catalogue*. Mr. *Pope* himself, in a Letter to *Aaron Hill*, supposes it of that age; but a mistaken accent determines it to be modern,

“ This late example
Of base Henriquez, bleeding in me now,
From each good *Aspect* takes away my trust.”

And in another place,

“ You have an *Aspect*, Sir, of wondrous wisdom.”

The word *Aspect*, you perceive, is here accented on the first Syllable, which, I am confident, was never the case in the time of *Shakespeare*; tho' it may sometimes appear to be so, by not observing the Elision of a preceding one.*

Some of the professed Imitators of our old Poets have not attended to this and many other *Minutiæ*: I could point out to you several performances in the respective *Styles* of *Chaucer*, *Spenser*, and *Shakespeare*, which the imitated Bard could not possibly have either read or construed.

But to return, as we say on other occasions.

— Perhaps the Advocates for *Shakespeare's* knowledge of the *Latin* language may be more successful. Mr. *Gildon* takes the Van. "It is plain, that He was acquainted with the Fables of antiquity very well: that some of the Arrows of *Cupid* are pointed with Lead, and others with Gold, he found in *Ovid*; and what he speaks of *Dido*, in *Virgil*: nor do I know any translation of these Poets so ancient as *Shakespeare's* time." The passages on which these sagacious remarks are made, occur in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; and exhibit,

* Thus a line in *Hamlet's* description of the Player,

"Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect."

should be printed as in the old Folio's,

"Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect."

bit, we see, a clear proof of acquaintance with the *Latin* Classics. But we are not answerable for Mr. Gildon's ignorance; he might have been told of *Caxton* and *Douglas*, of *Surrey* and *Stanyburst*, of *Phaer* and *Twyne*, of *Fleming* and *Golding*! but these *fables* were easily known without the help of either the originals or the translations. The Fate of *Dido* had been sung very early by *Chaucer*, *Gower*, and *Lydgate*; and *Cupid's* arrows appear with their characteristick differences in *Surrey*, in *Sidney*, in *Spenser*, and every Sonetteer of the time. Nay, their very names were exhibited long before in the *Romaunt of the Rose*: a work, you may venture to look into, notwithstanding Mr. Prynne hath so positively assured us, on the word of *John Gerson*, that the Author is most certainly damned, if he did not care of a serious repentance.

Mr. *Whalley* argues in the same manner, and with the same success. He thinks a passage in the *Tempest*,

“ Great *Juno* comes; I know her by her Gait.”

A remarkable instance of *Shakespeare's* knowledge of the ancient Poetick story; and that the hint was furnished by the *Divum incedo Regina* of *Virgil*.

You know, honest *John Taylor*, the Water-poet,

poet, declares that *he never learn'd his Accidence*, and that *Latin and French* were to him *Heathen-Greek*; yet by the help of Mr. *Whalley's* argument, I will prove him a *learned Man*, in spite of every thing, he may say to the contrary: for thus he makes a *Gallant* address his *Lady*,

“ Most inestimable Magazine of Beauty — in whom *the Port and Majesty of Juno*, the Wisdom of *Jove's* braine-bred Girle, the Feature of *Cytherea*,^d &c. have their domestical habitation.”

In the *Merchant of Venice*, we have an oath “ By two-headed *Janus* ;” and here, says Dr. *Warburton*, *Shakespeare* shows his knowledge in the Antique: and so again does the Water-poet, who describes *Fortune*

“ Like a *Janus* with a double face.”

But

^d This passage recalls to my memory a very extraordinary fact. A few years ago, at a great Court on the Continent, a Countryman of our's of high rank and character, exhibited with many other Candidates his complimentary Epigram on the Birth-day, and carried the prize in triumph,

“ O Regina orbis prima & pulcherrima: ridens
Es Venus, incedens Juno, Minerva loquens.”

Literally stolen from Angerianus,

“ Tres quondam nudas videt Priameius heros
Luce deas: video tres quoque luce deas.

Hoc majus; tres uno in corpore: *Cælia ridens
Est Venus, incedens Juno, Minerva loquens.*”

But *Shakespeare* hath somewhere a *Latin Motto*, quoth *Dr. Sewel*; and so hath *John Taylor*, and a whole Poem upon it into the bargain.

You perceive, my dear Sir, how vague and indeterminate such arguments must be: I am sorry to trouble you with trifles, yet what must be done, when grave men insist upon them?

It should seem to be the opinion of some modern criticks, that the personages of classic land began first to be known in *England* in the time of *Shakespeare*; or rather, that he particularly had the honour of introducing them to the notice of his countrymen.

For instance,—*Rumour, painted full of tongues*, gives us a Prologue to one of the parts of *Henry the Fourth*; and, says *Dr. Dodd*, *Shakespeare* had doubtless a view to either *Virgil's* or *Ovid's* description of *Fame*.

But why so? *Stephen Hawes* in his *Pastime of Pleasure* had long before exhibited her in the same manner,

“A goodly Lady envyroned about
With tongues of fyre.”——

and so had *Sir Thomas More* in one of his Pageants,

“Fame I am called, mervayle you nothing
Though with tonges I am compassed all rounde,”

not to mention her elaborate Portrait by *John Higgins*, in his Legend of King *Albanacte*.

Thus likewise every word of antiquity is to be cut down to the classical standard.

In a Note on the Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*, Mr. *Theobald* informs us, that the very names of the gates of *Troy*, have been barbarously demolished by the Editors: and a deal of learned dust he makes in setting them right again; much however to Mr. *Heath's* satisfaction. But had he looked into the *Troy boke* of *Lydgate*, instead of puzzling himself with *Dares Phrygius*, he would have found this horrid demolition to have been neither the work of *Shakespeare* nor his Editors.

Mr. *Upton*, not contented with *Heathen* learning, when he finds it in the text, will necessarily super-add it, when it happens to be wanting; because *Shakespeare* most certainly intended it!

In *Much ado about Nothing*, Don *Pedro* says of *Benedict*, "He hath twice or thrice cut *Cupid's* bow-string, and the little *Hangman* dare not shoot at him."

This mythology the critick does not recollect in the Ancients, and therefore doubts not, but his Author wrote "*Henchman*, i. e.

Page, Pufio: and this word seeming too hard for the Printer, he translated the little Urchin into a *Hangman*, a character no way belonging to him."

But this character was not borrowed from the Ancients; it came from the *Arcadia* of Sir *Philip Sidney*:

"Millions of yeares this old drivell *Cupid* lives;
While still more wretch, more wicked he doth prove;
Till now at length that *Jove* him office gives,
(At *Juno's* suite who much did *Argus* love)

In this our world a *Hangman* for to be
Of all those fooles that will have all they see."

I know it may be objected on the authority of such Biographers, as *Theophilus Cibber*, and the writer of the Life of Sir *Philip*, prefixed to the modern Editions; that the *Arcadia* was not published before 1613, and consequently too late for this imitation: but I have a Copy in my own possession, printed for *W. Ponsonbie*, 1590, 4to. though it hath escaped the notice of the industrious *Ames*, and the rest of our typographical Antiquaries.

Our excellent friend Mr. *Hurd* hath endeavoured to *fasten* only one imitation on *Shakespeare*: which hath been insisted upon likewise by Mr. *Upton* and Mr. *Whalley*. You remember it in the famous Speech of *Claudio* in *Measure for Measure*.

Most

Most certainly the Idea of the "Spirit bathing in fiery floods," or of residing "in thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice," is not original to our Poet; which is the whole, that is wanted for the argument: but I am not sure, that they came from the *Platonick* hell of *Virgil*. The Monks also had their hot and their cold Hell, "the fyrste is fyre that ever brenneth, and never gyveth lighte, says an old Homily: — The seconde is passyng colde, that yf a greate hylle of fyre were cast therin, it shold torne to yce." One of their Legends, well remembered in the time of *Shakespeare*, gives us a Dialogue between a Bishop and a Soul tormented in a piece of ice, which was brought to cure a *brenning beate* in his foot: take care, that you do not interpret this the *Gout*, for I remember *Menage* quotes a Canon upon us,

"Si quis dixerit Episcopum *podagrâ* laborare, Anathema sit."

Another tells us of the Soul of a Monk fastened to a Rock, which the winds were to blow about for a twelvemonth, and purge of it's Enormities. Indeed this doctrine was before now introduced into poetick fiction, as you may see in a Poem "where the Lover declar-eth his pains to exceed far the pains of Hell," among the many miscellaneous ones subjoined

to the Works of *Surrey*: of which you will soon have a beautiful Edition from the able hand of my Friend Mr. *Percy*. Nay, a very learned and inquisitive Brother-Antiquary hath observed to me, on the authority of *Bleskenius*, that this was the ancient opinion of the inhabitants of *Iceland*, who were certainly very little read either in the Poet or the Philosopher.

But to come nearer to the purpose, what will you say, if I can shew you, that *Shakespeare*, when, in the favourite phrase, he had a *Latin* Claffick in his Eye, most assuredly made use of a Translation.

Prospero in the *Tempest* begins the Address to his Spirits,

“Ye Elves of Hills, of standing Lakes, and Groves.”

This speech, Dr. *Warburton* rightly observes to be borrowed from *Medea's* in *Ovid*: and it proves, says Mr. *Holt*, beyond contradiction, that *Shakespeare* was perfectly acquainted with the Sentiments of the Ancients on the Subject of Inchantments. The original lines are these,

“Auræque, & venti, montesque, amnesque, lacusque,
Diique omnes nemorum, diique omnes noctis adeste.”

The translation of which by *Golding* is by no means literal, and *Shakespeare* hath closely followed it;

“ Ye Ayres and Winds ; *Ye Elves of Hills*, of Brookes,
of Woods alone,
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everych
one.”

I think it is unnecessary to pursue this any further, especially as more powerful arguments await us.

In the *Merchant of Venice*, the Jew, as an apology for his behaviour to *Antonio*, rehearſes many Sympathies and Antipathies for which *no reason can be rendered*,

“ Some love not a gaping Pig —
And others when a *Bagpipe* ſings i'th' noſe
Cannot contain their urine for affection.”

This incident, Dr. *Warburton* ſuppoſes to be taken from a paſſage in *Scaliger's Exercitationes* againſt *Cardan*, “ Narrabo tibi jocofam Sympathiam Reguli Vaſconis Equitis : Is dum viveret audito Phormingis ſono, urinam illico facere cogeſatur.” And, proceeds the Doctor, to make this jocular ſtory ſtill more ridiculous, *Shakeſpeare*, I ſuppoſe, tranſlated *Phorminx* by *Bagpipes*.

Here we ſeem fairly caught; for *Scaliger's* work was never, as the term goes, *done into Engliſh*. But luckily in an old book tranſlated from the *French* of *Peter Le Loier*, entitled, *A treatiſe of Specters, or ſtraunge Sightſ*, &c. we have this
identical

identical Story from *Scaliger* : and what is still more, a marginal Note gives us in all probability the very fact alluded to, as well as the word of *Shakespeare*, “ Another Gentleman of this quality liued of late in Deuon neere Excester, who could not endure the playing on a *Bagpipe*.”

A word in *Queen Catherine's* Character of *Wolfey*, in *Henry the 8th*, is brought by the Doctor as another argument for the learning of *Shakespeare*.

“ He was a man
Of an unbounded Stomach, ever ranking
Himself with Princes ; one that by *Suggestion*
Ty'd all the kingdom. Simony was fair play.
His own opinion was his law. i'th' presence
He would say untruths, and be ever double
Both in his words and meaning. He was never
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful.
His promises were, as he then was, mighty ;
But his performance, as he now is, nothing.
Of his own body he was ill, and gave
The Clergy ill example.”

The word *Suggestion*, says the Critick, is here used with great propriety, and seeming knowledge of the Latin tongue. And he proceeds to settle the sense of it from *the late Roman writers and their glossers* : but *Shakespeare's* knowledge was from *Holingshed* ; he follows him *verbatim*,

“ This Cardinal was of a great stomach, for he compted himself equal with princes, and by craftie *Suggestion* got into his hands innumerable treasure : he forced little on simonie, and was not pitifull, and stood affectionate in his own opinion : in open presence he would lie and seie untruth, and was double both in speech and meaning : he would promise much and performe little : he was vicious of his bodie, and gaue the clergie euil example.” And it is one of the articles of his Impeachment in Dr. *Fiddes*’ Collections, “ That the said Lord Cardinal got a Bull for the suppressing certain houses of Religion, by his untrue *Suggestion* to the Pope.”

Perhaps after these quotations, you may not think, that Sir *Thomas Hanmer*’s conjecture, who reads *Tyth’d* instead of *Ty’d* in the above passage, deserves quite so much of Dr. *Warburton*’s severity.

Mr. *Upton* and some other Criticks have thought it very *scholar-like* in *Hamlet* to swear the Centinels on his *Sword* : but this is for ever met with. In *Hieronimo*, for instance, the common Butt of our Author and the Wits of the time, says *Lorenzo* to *Pedringano*,

“ Swear on this cross, that what thou sayst is true —
But if I prove thee perjured and unjust,

This very *sword*, whereon thou took'st thine oath
Shall be the worker of thy Tragedy !”

And in *Dekker's Satiro-mastix*, or the *Untrusting of the humorous Poet*, Sir *Rees ap Vaughan* swears in the same manner. We have therefore no occasion to go with Mr. *Garrick* as far as the *French of Brantôme* to illustrate this ceremony.

A stronger argument hath been brought from the Plot of *Hamlet*. Dr. *Grey* and Mr. *Whalley* assure us, that for this *Shakespeare* must have read *Saxo Grammaticus* in the Original, for no translation hath been made into any modern Language. But the misfortune is, that he did not take it from *Saxo* at all ; a Novel called the *Historie of Hamblet* was his original : a fragment of which, in *black Letter*, I have seen in the hands of a very curious and intelligent Gentleman, to whom the lovers of *Shakespeare* will some time or other owe great obligations.

Mr. *Colman*, in the Preface to his elegant Translation of *Terence*, hath offered some arguments against us : which have been retailed with much confidence, since the appearance of Mr. *Johnson's* Edition.

“ Besides the resemblance of particular passages scattered up and down in different plays,
it

it is well known, that the *Comedy of Errors* is in great measure founded on the *Menæchmi* of *Plautus*; but I do not recollect ever to have seen it observed, that the disguise of the *Pedant* in the *Taming of the Shrew*, and his assuming the name and character of *Vincentio*, seem to be evidently taken from the disguise of the *Sycophanta* in the *Trinummus* of the said Author; and there is a quotation from the *Eunuch* of *Terence* also, so familiarly introduced into the Dialogue of the *Taming of the Shrew*, that I think it puts the question of *Shakespeare's* having read the Roman Comick Poets in the original language out of all doubt,

Redime te captum, quam queas, minimo."

With respect to *resemblances*, I shall not trouble you any further. — that the *Comedy of Errors* is founded on the *Menæchmi*, it is notorious: nor is it less so, that a Translation of it by W. W. perhaps *William Warner*, the Author of *Albions England*, was extant in the time of *Shakespeare*; tho' Mr. *Upton* and some other advocates for his learning have cautiously dropt the mention of it. Besides this, in the *Gesta Grayorum*, the Christmas Revels of the *Gray's-Inn Gentlemen*, 1594, "a *Comedy of Errors* like to *Plautus* his *Menæchmus*

nechmus was played by the Players." And the same hath been suspected, to be the goodlie *Comedie of Plautus* acted at *Greenwich* before the King and Queen in 1520, as we learn from *Hall* and *Hollingshed*: *Riccoboni* highly compliments the *English* on opening their stage so well; but unfortunately, *Cavendish* in his *Life of Wolsey*, calls it, an excellent *Interlude in Latine*. About the same time however it was exhibited in *German* at *Nuremburgh*, by the celebrated *Hanssach* the *Shoemaker*.

But a character in the *Taming of the Shrew* is borrowed from the *Trinummus*, and no translation of *that* was extant.

If Mr. *Colman* had met with an old Comedy, called *Supposes*, translated from *Aristo* by *George Gascoigne*, he would not have appealed to *Plautus*. Thence *Shakespeare* borrowed this part of the Plot, and indeed some of the phraseology, though *Theobald* pronounces it his own invention: here likewise he found the name of *Petruckio*. My young Master and his Man exchange habits and characters, and oblige a *Sciennese* to represent the Father, exactly as in the *Taming of the Shrew*, by persuading him of the danger of his coming from *Scienna* to *Ferrara*, contrary to the order of the government.

Still,

Still, *Shakespeare* quotes a line from the *Eunuch* of Terence: by memory too, and what is more, “purposely alters it, in order to bring the sense within the compass of one line.”

I could cut the knot by saying somewhat against *Shakespeare's* property in this part of the Play; but at present be contented with Mr. *Johnson's* observation, “Our Author had this line from *Lilly*; which I mention that it may not be brought as an argument of his learning.”

But how, cries an unprovoked Antagonist, can you take upon you to say, that he had it from *Lilly*, and not from *Terence*? I will answer for Mr. *Johnson*, who is above answering for himself.—Because it is quoted as it appears in the *Grammarian*, and not as it appears in the *Poet*.—and thus we have done with the *purposed* alteration. *Udall* likewise in his *Floures for Latin speaking*, gathered out of *Terence* 1560, reduces the passage to one line, and subjoins a Translation.

But the sheet-anchor holds fast: *Shakespeare* himself hath left some Translations from *Ovid*. The Epistles, says One, of *Paris* and *Helen* give a sufficient proof of his acquaintance with *that* poet; and it may be concluded, says Another, that he was a competent judge
of

of other Authors, who wrote in the same language.

This hath been the universal cry, from Mr. *Pope* himself to the Criticks of yesterday. Possibly, however the Gentlemen will hesitate a moment, if we tell them, that *Shakespeare* was *not* the Author of these Translations. Let them turn to a forgotten book, by *Thomas Heywood*, called *Britaines Troy*, printed by *W. Jaggard* in 1609; and they will find these identical Epistles, “which being so pertinent to our Historie, says *Heywood*, I thought necessarie to translate.” How then came they ascribed to *Shakespeare*? I will tell them that likewise. The same voluminous Writer published in 1612, an *Apology for Actors*, and in an Appendix directed to his new Printer *Nic. Okes*, he accuses his old One, *Jaggard*, of “taking the two Epistles of *Paris* to *Helen*, and *Helen* to *Paris*, and printing them in a less volume under the name of *Another*: — but he was much offended with Master *Jaggard*, that altogether unknowne to him, he had presumed to make so bold with his Name.” In the same work of *Heywood* are all the other Translations, which have been printed in the modern Editions of the Poems of *Shakespeare*.

You now hope for land: We have seen

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through

through little matters, but what must be done with a whole book? in 1751, was reprinted “A compendious or briefe examination of certayne ordinary complaints of diuers of our Countrymen in these our days : which although they are in some parte unjust and friuolous, yet are they all by way of Dialogue thoroughly debated and discussed by *William Shakespeare*, Gentleman.”

This extraordinary piece was originally printed in 1581, and dedicated by the Author, “To the most vertuous and learned Lady, his most deare and soveraigne Princeesse, *Elizabeth*; being inforced by her Majesties late and singular clemency in pardoning certayne his unduetifull misdemeanour.” And by the modern Editors to the late King, as “a Treatise composed by the most extensive and fertile Genius, that ever any age or nation produced.”

Here we join issue with the Writers of that excellent work, the *Biographia Britannica*: if, say

* I must however correct a remark in the life of *Spenser*, which is impotently levelled at the first Criticks of the age. It is observed from the correspondence of *Spenser* and *Gabriel Harvey*, that the Plan of the *Fairy Queen* was laid, and part of it executed in 1580, three years before the *Jerusalem* of *Tasso* was printed: hence appears the impertinence of all the apolo-

say they, this piece could be written by our Poet, it would be absolutely decisive in the dispute about his learning; for many quotations appear in it from the Greek and Latin Classics.

The concurring circumstances of the *Name*, and the *Misdemeanor*, which is supposed to be the old Story of *Deer-stealing*, seem fairly to challenge our Poet for the Author: but they hesitate. His claim, they observe, appears to be confuted by the date 1581, and the long experience, which the Author talks of. But I will not keep you in suspense: the book was *not* written by *Shakespeare*.

Strype calls the Writer *some learned Man*, and this gave me the first suspicion. I knew very well, that honest *John* did not waste his time with such *baggage books* as Plays and Poems; yet I must suppose, that he had heard of the name of *Shakespeare*. After a while I met with the original Edition. Here in the Title-page and at the End of the Dedication appear

apologies for his choice of *Ariosto's* manner in preference to *Tasso's*!

But the fact is not true with respect to *Tasso*. *Manfio* and *Niceron* inform us, that his Poem was published though imperfectly in 1574; and I myself can assure the Biographer, that I have met with at least *six* more Editions, preceding his date for it's first publication.

appear only the Initials, W. S. Gent. and presently I was informed by *Anthony Wood*, that the book in question was written, not by *William Shakespeare*, but by *William Stafford*, Gentleman: which at once accounted for the *Misdemeanor* in the Dedication. For *Stafford* had been at that time, and was indeed afterward, as *Camden* and the other Annalists inform us, concerned with some of the many conspirators against that Queen; which he properly calls his *unduetifull* behaviour.

I hope by this time, that any One open to conviction may be nearly satisfied; and I will promise to give you on this head very little more trouble.

The celebrated Mr. *Warton* in his *Life of Dr. Bathurst*, hath favoured us with some *hearsay* particulars concerning *Shakespeare* from a MS. of *Aubrey's*, which had been in the hands of *Wood*; and I ought not to suppress them, as the last seems to make against my doctrine. They came originally, I find on consulting the MS. from one Mr. *Beeston*: and I am sure Mr. *Warton*, whom I have the honour to call my Friend, will be in no pain about their credit.

“ *William Shakespeare's* Father was a Butcher,
— while he was a Boy he exercised his Father's
ther's

ther's trade, but when he killed a Calf, he would do it in a high stile, and make a speech. This *William* being inclined naturally to Poetry and Acting, came to *London*, I guess, about *eighteen*, and was an Actor in one of the Playhouses, and did act exceedingly well. He began early to make Effays in dramatique Poetry.—The humour of the Constable in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* he happen'd to take at *Crendon* in *Bucks.*—I think, I have been told, that he left near 300*l.* to a Sister.—He understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger yeares a Schoolmaster in the Country."

I will be short in my animadversions; and take them in their order.

The account of the *Trade* of the Family is not only contrary to all other Tradition, but, as it may seem, to the instrument from the Herald's office, so frequently reprinted.——*Shakespeare* most certainly went to *London*, and commenced Actor thro' necessity, not natural inclination.——Nor have we any reason to suppose, that he did act exceedingly well. *Rowe* tells us from the information of *Betterton*, who was inquisitive into this point, and had very early opportunities of Inquiry from Sir *W. Davenant*, that he was no extraordinary Actor;

Actor; and that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*. Yet this *Chef d' Oeuvre* did not please: I will give you an original stroke at it. Dr. *Lodge*, who as well as his *quondam* Colleague *Greene*, was for ever pestering the town with Pamphlets, published one in the year 1596, called *Wits miserie, and the Worlds madnesse, discovering the Devils incarnat of this Age*. One of these Devils is *Hate-virtue*, who, says the Doctor, "looks as pale as the Visard of the Ghost, which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an Oister-wife, *Hamlet revenge*." Thus you see Mr. *Holt's* argument in the Appendix to the late Edition, that *Hamlet* was written after 1597, or perhaps 1602, will by no means hold good; whatever might be the case of the particular passage on which it is founded.

Nor does it appear, that *Shakespeare* did begin early to make Essays in Dramatick Poetry: the *Arraignment of Paris*, 1584, which hath so often been ascribed to him, was written by *George Peele*; and his name is not met with, even as an Assistant, 'till at least seven years afterward.

In the next place, unfortunately, there is neither such a Character as a *Constable* in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, nor such a place as
Crendon

Crendon in *Bucks*, if we may believe *Spelman* and the *Index Villaris*: nor was the Legacy of 300*l.* to the Sister, but the Daughter.

And to close the whole, it is not possible according to *Aubrey* himself, that *Shakespeare* could have been *some years* a Schoolmaster in the Country: on which only the supposition of his learning is founded. He was not surely *very* young, when he was employed to *kill Calves*, and he commenced Player about *Eighteen!* The truth is, that he left his Father, and married at *Seventeen*, and had two Children before he retired from *Stratford* to *London*. It is therefore sufficiently clear, that poor *Anthony* had too much reason for his Character of *Aubrey*: You will find it in his own Account of his Life, published by *Hearne*, which I would earnestly recommend to any Hypochondriack,

“ A pretender to Antiquities, roving, magotie-headed, and sometimes little better than crazed: and being exceedingly credulous, would stuff his many Letters sent to A. W. with *folliries* and misinformations.”

Thus much for the Learning of *Shakespeare* with respect to the ancient languages: indulge me with an observation or two on his supposed knowledge of the modern ones, and I will promise to release you.

“ It is *evident*, says one of his last Criticks, that he was not unacquainted with the *Italian* :” but let us inquire into the *Evidence*.

Certainly some *Italian* words and phrases appear in the Works of *Shakespeare* ; yet if we had nothing else to observe, their Orthography might lead us to suspect them to be not of the Writer’s importation. But we can go further, and prove this.

When *Pistol* “ cheers up himself with ends of verse,” he is only a copy of *Hannibal Gonzaga*, who ranted on yielding himself a Prisoner, as you may read in an old Collection of Tales, called *Wits, Fits, and Fancies*,

“ Si Fortuna me tormenta,
Il speranza me contenta.”

And Sir *Richard Hawkins*, in his Voyage to the South-Sea, 1593, throws out the same jingling Distick on the loss of his Pinnace.

“ Master *Page*, fit ; good Master *Page*, fit ; *Proface*. What you want in meat, we’ll have in drink,” says Justice *Shallow*’s *Fac totum*, *Davy*, in the 2d Part of *Henry* the 4th.

Proface, Sir *Thomas Hanmer* observes to be *Italian* from *profaccia*, much good may it do you. Mr. *Johnson* rather thinks it a mistake for *perforce*. Sir *Thomas* however is right ; yet it is no argument for his Author’s *Italian* knowledge.

Old *Heywood*, the Epigrammatist, addressed his Readers long before,

“ Readers, reade this thus: for Preface, *Proface*,
Much good do it you, the poore repast here, &c.”

Nor hath it escaped the quibbling manner of the *Water-poet*, in the Title of a Poem prefixed to his *Praise of Hempseed*, “ A Preamble, Preatrot, Preagallop, Preapace, or Preface; and *Proface*, my Masters, if your Stomacks serve.”

But the Editors are not contented without coining *Italian*. “ *Rivo*, says the Drunkard,” is an Expression of the *madcap* Prince of Wales; which Sir *Thomas Hanmer* corrects to *Ribi*, *Drink away*. Dr. *Warburton* accedes to this; and Mr. *Johnson* hath admitted it into his Text; but with an observation, that *Rivo* might possibly be the cant of *English* Taverns. And so indeed it was: it occurs frequently in *Marston*. Take a quotation from his Comedy of *What you will*;

“ Musicke, Tobacco, Sacke, and Sleepe,
The Tide of sorrow backward keep:
If thou art sad at others fate,
Rivo, drink deep, give care the mate.”

I fancy, you will be satisfied with one more instance.

“ *Baccare*, You are marvellous forward,”
F quoth

quoth *Gremio* to *Petruchio* in the *Taming of the Shrew*.

“But not so *forward*, says Mr. *Theobald*, as our Editors are *indolent*. This is a stupid corruption of the press, that none of them have dived into. We must read *Baccalare*, as Mr. *Warburton* acutely observed to me, by which the *Italians* mean, Thou ignorant, presumptuous Man.”

This is admitted by the Editors and Criticks of every Denomination. Yet the word is neither wrong, nor *Italian*: it was an old proverbial Expression, and used frequently by *John Heywood*; he hath even made, what he pleases to call, *Epigrams* upon it.

Take two of them, such as they are,

“*Backare*, quoth *Mortimer* to his Sow:
Went that Sow *backe* at that bidding trowe you?”

“*Backare*, quoth *Mortimer* to his sow: se
Mortimers sow speakth as good *latin* as he.”

And *Philpot* introduces it into the Proverbs collected by *Camden*.

We have but few observations concerning *Shakespeare's* knowledge of the *Spanish* tongue. Dr. *Grey* indeed is willing to suppose, that the Plot of *Romeo and Juliet* may be borrowed from a Comedy of *Lopes de Vega*. But the *Spaniard*, who was certainly acquainted with *Bandello*,
hath

hath not only changed the Catastrophe, but the names of the Characters. Neither *Romeo* nor *Juliet*; neither *Mountague* nor *Capulet* appears in this performance: and how came they to the knowledge of *Shakespeare*? Nothing is more certain, than that he followed the old Translation by *Painter* from the *French* of *Boisteau*, and hence arise the Deviations from *Bandello's* original. It seems however from a passage in *Ames's* *Typographical Antiquities*, that *Painter* was not the only Translator of this popular Story.

In the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew*, the Tinker attempts to talk *Spanish*: and consequently, we have been told, the Author himself was acquainted with it,

“*Paucus pallabris*, let the World slide, *Sessa*.”

But this is a burlesque on *Hieronimo*; the piece of Bombast, that I have mentioned to you before:

“What new device have they devised, trow?
Pocas pallabras, &c.”

Mr. *Whalley* tells us, “the Author of this piece hath the happiness to be at this time unknown, the remembrance of him having perished with himself:” but I take this opportunity of informing him, that his Name was

Thomas Kyd; if he will accept the authority of one of his Contemporaries.

More hath been said concerning *Shakespeare's* acquaintance with the *French* language. In the Play of *Henry the fifth*, we have a whole Scene in it; and in other places it occurs familiarly in the Dialogue.

I will only observe in general, that in the early Editions we have not half the quantity; and every sentence, or rather every word most ridiculously blundered. These, for several reasons, could not possibly be published by the Author;^f and it is equally probable, that the

French

^f Every writer on *Shakespeare* hath expressed his astonishment, that his author was not solicitous to secure his Fame by a correct Edition of his performances. This matter is not understood. When a Poet was connected with a particular Playhouse, he constantly sold his works to the *Company*, and it was their interest to keep them from a number of Rivals. A favourite piece, as *Heywood* informs us, only got into print, when it was copied *by the ear*, “for a double sale would bring on a suspicion of honesty.” *Shakespeare* therefore himself published nothing in the *Drama*: when he left the Stage, his copies remained with the Managers, *Heminge* and *Condell*; who on their own retirement, about seven years after the death of the author, gave the world the Edition now known by the name of the *first Folio*; and call every preceding one “stolne and surreptitious, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors.” But *this* was printed from the Playhouse

French ribaldry was at first inserted by a different hand, as the many additions after he had left the Stage.

Mr. *Hawkins* in the Appendix to the late Edition, hath an ingenious observation to prove, that *Shakespeare*, supposing the *French* to be his, had very little knowledge of the language.

“ Est-il impossible d’eschapper la force de ton *bras*? says a *Frenchman*. *Brass*, cur? replies *Pistol*.

“ Almost any one knows, that the French word *bras* is pronounced *brau*; and what resemblance of sound does this bear to *Brass*?”—

Mr. *Johnson* makes a doubt, whether the pronounciation of the French language may not be changed, since *Shakespeare’s* time: but this does not appear to be the case, at least in this termination, from the rules of the Grammarians, or the practice of the Poets. I am certain of the former from the *French Alphabet*

Copies; which in a series of years had been frequently altered thro’ convenience, caprice, or ignorance. We have a sufficient instance of the liberties taken by the Actors, in an old pamphlet, by *Thomas Nashe*, called *the Prayse of the red Herring*: where he assures us, that in a Play of his, called the *Isle of Dogs*, “*four* *acts*, without his consent, or the least guesse of his drift or scope, were supplied by the Players.”

beth of *De la Mothe*, and of the latter from the Rhymes of *Marot* and *Ronsard*.

It hath been observed, that *Rabelais* is sometimes alluded to by *Shakespeare*: and no translation was extant in his time.— but the Story was in every one's hand.

In *Laneham's* Letter concerning the Entertainment at *Killingwoorth Castle*, printed 1575, is a list of the vulgar Romances of the age, “ King *Arthurz* book, *Huon of Burdeaus*, *Friar Rous*, *Howleglass*, and GARGANTUA.

§ *Mere's* in his *Wits Treasury* mentions him as equally hurtful to young minds with the four Sons of *Aymon*, and the *Seven Champions*. And *John Taylor* hath him likewise in his list of Authors, prefixed to *Sir Gregory Nonsence*.

But to come to a conclusion, I will give you a *demonstrative* argument, that *Shakespeare* did *not* understand two very common words in the *French* and *Latin* languages :

According to the Articles of agreement between the Conqueror *Henry* and the King of *France*, the latter was to stile the former,
“ *Nostre*

§ This Author by a pleasant mistake in some sensible *Conjectures on Shakespeare* lately printed at Oxford, is quoted by the name of *Maister*. Perhaps the Title-page was imperfect; it runs thus “ *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury. Being the second part of Wits Common wealth. By Francis Meres Maister of Artes of both Universities.*

“ Nostre *tres cher* filz *Henry Roy d’ Angleterre* ; and in *Latin*, *Præclarissimus Filius*, &c.” What, says Dr. Warburton, is *tres cher* in *French*, *præclarissimus* in *Latin* ! we should read *præcarissimus*. — This is exceedingly true ; but how came the blunder ? it is a typographical one in *Holingshed*, which *Shakespeare* copied ; but must indisputably have corrected, had he been acquainted with the languages.

“ Our said Father, during his life, shall name, call, and write us in *French* in this maner : Nostre *tres chier* filz, *Henry Roy d’ Engleterre* — and in *Latine* in this maner, *Præclarissimus filius noster*.” Edit. 1587. P. 574.

To corroborate this instance, let me observe to you, though it be nothing further to the purpose, that another typographical error hath been the source of a mistake in an historical passage of our Author ; which hath ridiculously troubled the Criticks ;

^h *Richard* the 3d. harangues his army before the Battle of *Bosworth*,

“ Re-

^h Some inquiry hath been made for the first Performers of the capital Characters in *Shakespeare*.

We learn, that *Burbage*, the alter *Roscus* of *Camden*, was the original *Richard*, from a passage in the Poems of Bishop *Corbet* : who introduces his Host at *Bosworth* describing the Battle,

“ But

“Remember whom ye are to cope withal,
A sort of vagabonds, of rascals, runaways—
And who doth lead them but a paltry fellow
Long kept in *Britaine* at our *Mother's* cost,
A milkfop, &c.”

“*Our Mother's cost*” Mr. *Theobald* perceives to be wrong: he reads therefore, and all the Editors after him,

“Long kept in *Bretagne* at *his* mother's cost.”

But give me leave to transcribe a few more lines from *Holingshed*, and you will find at once, that *Shakespeare* had been there before me,

“Ye see further, how a companie of traitors, theeves, out-laws and runnagates be aiders and partakers of his feat and enterprife.— And to begin with the erle of Richmond captaine of this rebellion, he is a Welsh milkfop—brought up by *my Moother's* meanes and mine, like a captive in a close cage in the court of *Francis* duke of *Britaine*.” P. 756.

Holingshed copies this *verbatim* from his Brother Chronicler *Hall*, Edit. 1548. Fol. 54. but

“But when he would have said King *Richard* died,
And call'd a *Horfe*, a *Horfe*, he *Burbage* cried.”

The Play on this subject mentioned by Sir *John Harrington* in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, 1591, and sometimes mistaken for *Shakespeare's*, was a *Latin* one, written by Dr. *Legge*; many years before the date of the Copy in the *Museum*.

but his Printer hath given us by accident the word *Moother* instead of *Brother*; as it is in the Original, and ought to be in *Shakespeare*.

I hope, my good Friend, you have by this time acquitted our great Poet of all piratical depredations on the Ancients: He remembered perhaps enough of his *school-boy* learning to put the *Hig, hag, bog*, into the mouth of *Sir Hugh Evans*; and might pick up in the course of his conversation a familiar word or two of *French* or *Italian*: but his *Studies* were most demonstratively confined to *Nature* and *his own Language*.

In the course of this disquisition, you have often smiled at "all such reading, as was never read:" and possibly I may have indulged it too far: but it is the reading necessary for a Comment on *Shakespeare*. Those who apply solely to the Ancients for this purpose, may with equal wisdom study the *Talmud* for an Exposition of *Tristram Shandy*. Nothing but an intimate acquaintance with the Writers of the time, who are frequently of no other value, can point out his allusions, and ascertain his Phraseology. The Reformers of his Text are for ever equally positive, and equally wrong. The Cant of the Age, a provincial Expression, an obscure ^{say} Proverb, an obsolete

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Custom,

Custom, a Hint at a Person or a Fact no longer remembered, hath continually defeated the best of our *Guessers*: You must not suppose me to speak at random, when I assure you, that from some forgotten book or other, I can demonstrate this to you in many hundred Places; and I almost wish, that I had not been persuaded into a different Employment.

Tho' I have as much of the *Natale Solum* about me, as any man whatsoever; yet, I own, the *Primrose Path* is still more pleasing than the *Fosse* or the *Watling Street*:

“ Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale
It's infinite variety.”

And when I am fairly rid of the Dust of Antiquity, which is at present very thick about me, and indeed more in quantity, than I expected; you may very probably be troubled again with the ever fruitful Subject of SHAKESPEARE and his COMMENTATORS.

F I N I S.

